

window and descended the fire-escape. The latter was not a grand winding stairway as we see now, but only an iron ladder, very small and clinging close to the bare surface of the building.

Once on the ground, the little group struck out rapidly for the country. They walked with their hands buried deep in trousers pockets and their heads drawn down into upturned coat collars, for it was late fall and the night was chilly. Heavy dark clouds rolled across the sky and there was no moon.

In a short time the Preps were entering the orchard of a neighboring farm—no need to go to Shingletown and Boalsburg in those days.

“Fellows,” whispered one of the number, as all stepped onto the soft thick grass of the orchard, “listen, they roost on the third tree from the other end, second row; come on.”

The speaker led and the rest followed. Stealthily, cautiously, they crept along under the spreading trees of the orchard. Presently their leader stopped and all stopped and listened. A slight rustling sounded over their heads. Looking up, they saw, dimly outlined against the sky, the form of a fowl, with neck craned and head on a listening slant.

“Ah! that’s them!” exclaimed the leader in a loud whisper. Soon a clucking and fluttering of wings betrayed the presence of other beings of the same sort; all roosting in a long row on a branch of the tree.

The little party lost no time in carrying out the purpose of their trip. The next moment, from the top of the tree came a loud, frightened cackling and fluttering, and as those on the ground received the capture handed down the leader’s voice was again heard to exclaim:

“Grab ’em by the neck, you fool, so’s they won’t holloh!”

A dog barked fiercely at the farmhouse not far away and came slowly, with menacing growls, out toward the orchard. At once every Prep entered on a hundred yards dash, three of the number holding tightly by the neck a fluttering chicken.

In the farmhouse, at about the same time the intruders